



**VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY**  
**FY24 BUDGET PROPOSAL OVERVIEW**  
Superintendent Elizabeth D. Soto

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COMMISSIONERS VETERANS COMMITTEE DISTRICTS

# I. INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County (*To be herein additionally identified as the “VACCC”*) is a local unit of government that is composed of elected members, delegates, and alternates representing various Veteran Service Organizations in Cook County, Illinois. The central operational office includes a Superintendent and support staff dedicated to providing direct benefits and services to Cook County resident Veterans and their immediate family members.

Working collectively, the VACCC Office and Commission have a core objective of promoting the welfare of Honorably discharged Veterans and their families. The VACCC achieves this by maximizing available benefits, services and programs through effective advocacy and serving as a central hub for all Veterans in Cook County, Illinois.

The establishment of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County was created pursuant to the, *VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS (330 ILCS 45/) Military Veterans Assistance Act (MVAA)*. The act mandates the Commission to provide responsible aid, assistance and necessary services to the Veteran community:

***“...For the just, necessary, and needed assistance and services of military veterans, who served in the Armed Forces of the United States and whose last discharge from the service was honorable or general under honorable conditions, to be eligible for assistance, their families, and the families of deceased veterans with service as described in this Section who need assistance and services...”***

(330 ILCS 45/2 (From Ch. 23, par. 3082 Sec. 2 (Public Act 102-0732 revisions passed 5/6/2022 Effective Date January 1, 2023) Bottom of Form

The subsequent proposals will present an overview and outlook for expanded services and benefits for the Cook County Veteran community. These initiatives aim to provide much-needed assistance to Veterans and their families, outlining increases in supportive services, additional benefits, the introduction of new programs, and targeted outreach to underserved Veteran communities within Cook County, Illinois.

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The VACCC is designed to assist and provide financial assistance to Veterans in need who have served Honorably, in the United States Armed Forces and to their immediate families that reside in Cook County, Illinois. The VACCC is committed to efficiently and effectively delivering these services to eligible Veterans, recognizing the importance of timely support and assistance to meet their needs. The range of services that are currently being rendered and the time frames in which they are distributed by the VACCC office to said eligible and qualified Veterans are as follows:

- **Rental/ Mortgage Assistance:** Financial instability and secure housing are of extreme importance and vital for Veterans and their families. To support their housing needs, the VACCC offers immediate financial assistance towards their rent or mortgage. This benefit provides eligible and qualified Veterans with up to \$1,400.00 in direct financial assistance. These funds can be applied towards past due rental or mortgage payments, or as a first month's payment for a new rental or mortgage.

This benefit can be requested by an eligible and qualified Veteran once every 12-month time period.

- **Utility Assistance:** Past due utility bills can often place a financial strain on Veterans and their families. To provide support in this area, the VACCC offer immediate financial assistance towards their utility bills. This benefit offers eligible and qualified Veterans up to \$550.00 in financial assistance towards each individual past due electric, gas, and/or water utility bill(s).

Our Goal is to help alleviate the burden of past due utility bills, promote financial stability for Veterans and ensure their households have access to these essential services.

This benefit can be requested by an eligible and qualified Veteran once every 12-month time period

- **Food Assistance:** Access to nutritious food is essential for the well-being of Veterans and their families. To address emergency food assistance needs, the VACCC offers immediate food assistance. Through this benefit, eligible and qualified Veterans can receive a \$100.00 Aldi store gift card to cover immediate food needs.

In recognition of the importance of supporting the entire household, the VACCC also provides an additional \$100.00 Aldi store gift card to each qualifying dependent of the Veteran. This ensures that the needs of the Veteran's family members are also met during times of food insecurity. While the food assistance provides immediate relief, we also encourage Veterans and their families to explore other long-term solutions for food security, such as local food banks, community programs, and government assistance programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

By offering this immediate food assistance, our aim is to ensure that Veterans and their families have access to sufficient and nutritious food during times of need. We are committed to supporting their overall well-being and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

This benefit can be requested by a Veteran once every 6-month time period.

- **Public Transportation Assistance:** Reliable transportation for Veterans to access medical appointments, educational institutions, and workplaces is of utmost importance. To support Veterans transportation needs, the VACCC offers public transportation assistance. Through this benefit, eligible and qualified Veterans can receive free CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) and/or Pace single or 7-day transportation cards. These cards serve as a means of travel, enabling Veterans to secure transportation for their medical, school and/or work-related needs.

By providing these transportation cards, we aim to alleviate the financial burden of travel expenses and enable Veterans to reach their destinations safely, while ensuring they have the means to attend crucial appointments or fulfill their obligations.

This benefit can be requested by a Veteran on a weekly basis, or as needed.

- **Funeral/ Burial Assistance:** At the VACCC, we understand the emotional and financial challenges that can arise when a Veteran passes away. To provide support during this difficult time, we offer funeral/burial assistance to the next of kin, immediate family member, or Power of Attorney of a deceased Veteran.

Through this benefit, eligible individuals can receive up to \$1,500.00 in financial assistance to assist with the payment of a Veteran's funeral or burial expenses. This benefit aims to alleviate some of the financial burden associated with honoring and laying to rest our nation's Veterans.

We understand that the grieving process can be challenging, and our goal is to provide support and assistance during this time of loss. We encourage individuals seeking funeral/burial assistance to reach out to our dedicated team to discuss their specific circumstances and receive guidance on how to request the assistance.

By offering funeral/burial assistance, we aim to honor the service and sacrifice of Veterans and provide some relief to their loved ones in making the necessary arrangements. Our commitment is to support families and ensure that our Veterans receive a dignified final tribute.

- **Work Attire Assistance:** The VACCC recognizes the importance of professional attire when pursuing gainful employment. To support Veterans in their job search efforts, we offer work attire assistance. Through this benefit, eligible and qualified Veterans can receive a \$100.00 Walmart store gift card to assist with the purchase of new clothing for confirmed interviews.

We understand that presenting oneself professionally during job interviews can greatly impact the chances of securing employment. By offering work attire assistance, we aim to empower Veterans to make a positive first impression during interviews and increase their chances of securing employment. We are committed to supporting their professional growth and success in the civilian workforce.

This benefit can be requested by a Veteran once every 12-month time period.

- **Records:** There is great significance for Veterans having access to their important records and documents. To assist in obtaining these records, the VACCC provides guidance and support in applying for and obtaining free certified copies of a Veteran's DD214 from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). The DD214 is a crucial document that verifies a Veteran's military service and can be used for various purposes, such as accessing benefits and services.

The VACCC also assists in obtaining certified copies of other essential documents from the Vitals Records Department of the Cook County Clerk's office. These documents may include the Veteran's Cook County Birth Certificate, Cook County Marriage Certificate, or a Veterans Cook County Death Certificate.

By offering records assistance, we aim to help Veterans and their families access the necessary documentation to support their legal, administrative, and personal needs. Our commitment is to facilitate the retrieval of these records in a streamlined manner, honoring the service and contributions of our Veterans.

- **Programs:** The VACCC takes great pride in its commitment to supporting Veterans and their families through a range of programs designed to meet their unique needs. We recognize the importance of education and the challenges that may arise for Veterans' children as they return to school. To address this, we have implemented an annual 'Back to School Supply' program. This program aims to provide essential school supplies to the children of Veterans, ensuring they have the tools they need to succeed academically.

Additionally, we understand the significance of fostering a sense of joy and togetherness during special occasions. That's why the VACCC organizes an annual 'Holiday Event' specifically tailored for the children of Veterans. This event creates an opportunity for the children to experience the joy of the holiday season, engage in fun activities, and build lasting memories. It serves as a way to honor the sacrifices made by their parents while bringing the community together in a festive and supportive atmosphere.

These programs are just a few examples of the comprehensive support we offer to Veterans and their families. By providing these initiatives, we aim to alleviate some of the challenges they may face, promote a sense of belonging, and express our gratitude for their service to our nation.

- **Continuum of Care and Services:** The VACCC takes great pride in its extensive network of partnerships with local, Veteran specific community organizations, and governmental agencies. These collaborations enable us to offer a diverse range of additional free, in-house assistance to the Veteran community.

Our committed partners work closely with us to ensure that Veterans receive the specific help they need. Whether it's employment assistance to secure meaningful jobs, access to affordable housing options, mental health support, or guidance in navigating educational opportunities, our partnerships enhance the range of services we offer.

Through these robust collaborations, the VACCC aims to create a supportive ecosystem where Veterans can access a wide range of services conveniently at the VACCC office. These valuable partnerships are instrumental in our mission to improve the lives of Veterans by offering an additional layer of assistance and support.

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County is seeking a significant, yet reasonable budget increase, primarily aimed at providing enhanced financial assistance to the Cook County Veteran community. This increased funding will enable the VACCC to offer additional services that address the present-day needs aligned with the rising cost of living and personal consumption expenditure (PCE) inflation.

Approval of augmented funding will enable the VACCC office to expand its team, which will be charged with delivering the aforementioned benefits and services to the Veterans community. As mandated by the MVAA, the Cook County, Illinois Veteran population will remain the cynosure target audience for whom the current and future VACCC staff will continue to provide financial aid and assistance to.

The VACCC office will remain committed to aligning with the current mode of service issuance, ensuring that all eligible Veterans receive immediate access to benefits and services. Our dedicated team strives to efficiently determine eligibility and promptly provide a comprehensive range of services and financial assistance directly to Veterans and their families, in person. We are proud to offer same-day assistance to every eligible and qualified Veteran, prioritizing their needs and ensuring a seamless experience.



The VACCC office stands out as a major competitive advantage for local Veterans, distinguishing itself from surrounding county social services agencies at the local, state, and federal levels. Unlike many neighboring agencies, the VACCC offers immediate access to benefits without a lengthy approval process or delays in the disbursement and allocation of financial assistance. This streamlined approach significantly reduces the financial hardship, strain, and stress experienced by Veterans who would otherwise face extended waiting periods for essential services.

Through an expansion of its office personnel and increased financial assistance benefits, the VACCC seizes a remarkable opportunity to address the urgent needs of Veterans and their families. By promptly identifying and attending to their modern-day needs, the VACCC can provide immediate financial assistance, ensuring that Veterans receive the support they require without unnecessary delays.

This proposed expansion to the VACCC's personnel staff and services aims to serve a larger number of current and returning Veterans seeking benefits, as well as extend assistance to first-time eligible Veterans within the county who may not have previously accessed such services.



*VACCC Veteran Client, Tara Booker &*

*VACCC Executive Assistant, Vanessa Meadows*

The VACCC's commitment to expedited service delivery and comprehensive support, positions it as a primary leader in serving Veterans within Cook County. By continually improving and expanding its offerings, the VACCC remains dedicated to meeting the evolving needs of the Veteran community, ensuring that every eligible Veteran receives the timely assistance they deserve.

## III. MISSION STATEMENT



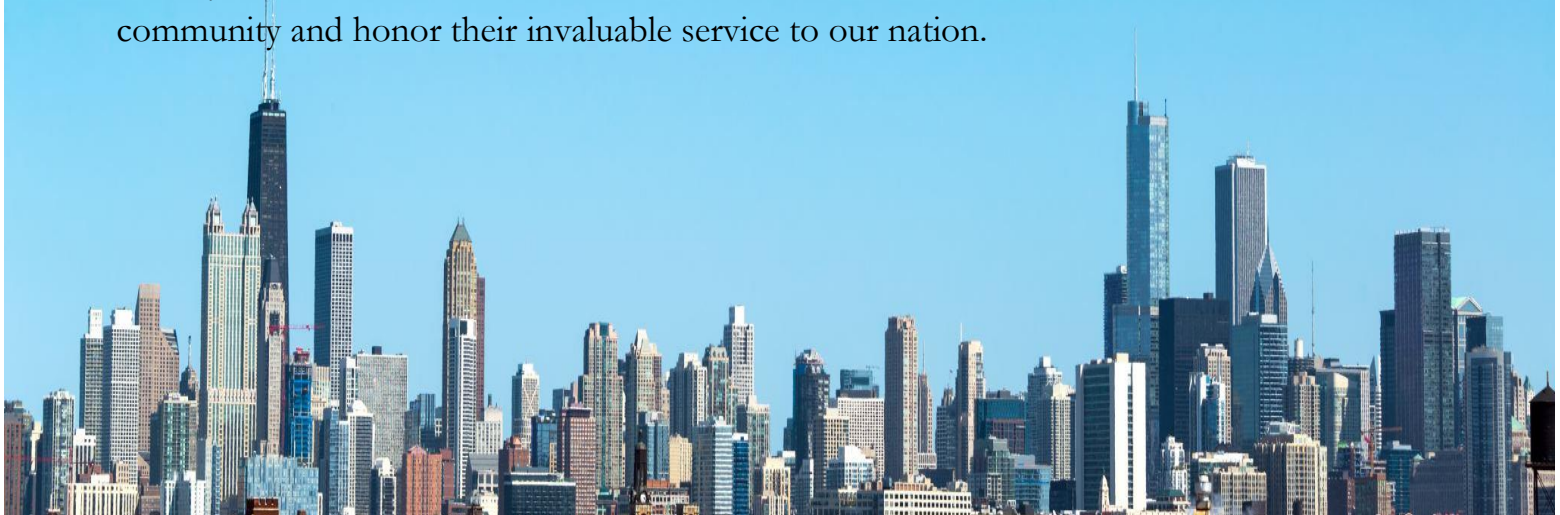
### OUR MISSION

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County's mission is to be the leading provider of immediate financial and comprehensive services to Cook County Veterans and their families. We pride ourselves on offering a distinct competitive advantage by delivering prompt access to all possible benefits through effective and dynamic advocacy.

With unwavering dedication, the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County strives to be the trusted partner that Cook County Veterans and their families can rely on for timely, efficient, and compassionate assistance.

In addition to our financial assistance programs, we are committed to delivering non-financial services and identifying other needs the Veteran community may have. Through our advocacy efforts, we strive to ensure that every Veteran receives the benefits they are entitled to, enabling them to lead fulfilling and dignified lives.

By continuously improving our services and advocating for the rights and well-being of Cook County Veterans and their families, we contribute to the betterment of our Veteran community and honor their invaluable service to our nation.



## IV. ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW



The Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County operates under the legal framework established by the Veterans and Service Members (330 ILCS 45/) Military Veterans Assistance Act (MVAA).

In addition to the MVAA, the VACCC's Executive Board and Membership's Delegates and Alternates maintain oversight of the VACCC operations.

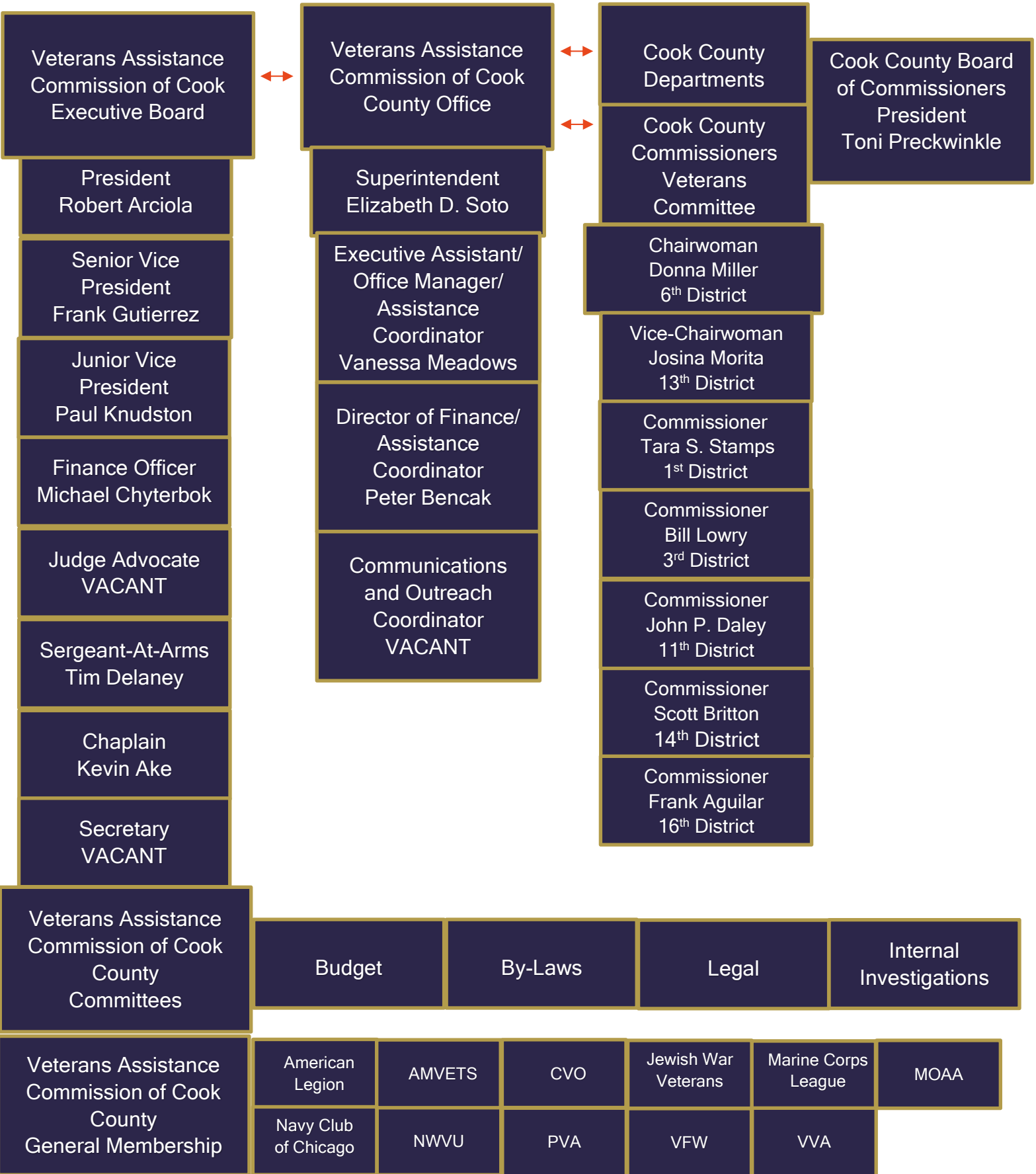
The VACCC's operations are also governed by various regulatory documents and ordinances. These include the VACCC By-Laws, the VACCC Office Policies and Procedures, and Cook County's "Ordinance Regarding the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County."

To ensure ethical conduct and accountability, the VACCC adheres to the Cook County's Ethics Ordinance and the Office of the Independent Inspector General Ordinance. These ordinances set standards for transparency, integrity, and proper governance.

Furthermore, the VACCC complies with applicable established Cook County policies, which may include policies related to compensation, employee rights, procurement, and budget.

By following these legal and regulatory frameworks, the VACCC upholds the highest standards of professionalism, transparency, and ethical behavior in its operations. These guidelines ensure that the VACCC operates within the legal boundaries and maintains the trust and confidence of the Veteran community it serves.

# V. FY23 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook Executive Board

President Robert Arciola

Senior Vice President Frank Gutierrez

Junior Vice President Paul Knudston

Finance Officer Michael Chyterbok

Judge Advocate VACANT

Sergeant-At-Arms Tim Delaney

Chaplain Kevin Ake

Secretary VACANT

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County Office

Superintendent Elizabeth D. Soto

Executive Assistant/Office Manager/Assistance Coordinator Vanessa Meadows

Director of Finance/Assistance Coordinator Peter Bencak

Communications and Outreach Coordinator VACANT

Cook County Departments

Cook County Commissioners Veterans Committee

Chairwoman Donna Miller 6<sup>th</sup> District

Vice-Chairwoman Josina Morita 13<sup>th</sup> District

Commissioner Tara S. Stamps 1<sup>st</sup> District

Commissioner Bill Lowry 3<sup>rd</sup> District

Commissioner John P. Daley 11<sup>th</sup> District

Commissioner Scott Britton 14<sup>th</sup> District

Commissioner Frank Aguilar 16<sup>th</sup> District

Cook County Board of Commissioners President Toni Preckwinkle

Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County Committees

Budget	By-Laws	Legal	Internal Investigations
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Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County General Membership

American Legion	AMVETS	CVO	Jewish War Veterans	Marine Corps League	MOAA
Navy Club of Chicago	NWVU	PVA	VFW	VVA	

## VI. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS & MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS:

<b>PRESIDENT</b>	Robert Arciola
<b>SENIOR-VICE PRESIDENT</b>	Frank Gutierrez
<b>JUNIOR-VICE PRESIDENT</b>	Paul M. Knudtson
<b>FINANCE OFFICER</b>	Michael Chyterbok
<b>JUDGE ADVOCATE</b>	VACANT
<b>SERGEANT-AT-ARMS</b>	Timothy Delaney
<b>CHAPLAIN</b>	Kevin Ake
<b>SECRETARY</b>	VACANT

### MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

#### CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS:

<b>American Legion Post 36</b>	<b>Delegate</b> – Patrick Flannigan <b>Alternate</b> – Gregory Jacobs
<b>American Legion Post 104</b>	<b>Delegate</b> – Lawrence M. Kagan <b>Alternate</b> – Dennis Chavez
<b>American Legion Post 183</b>	<b>Delegate</b> – Peter Papuc <b>Alternate</b> – Timothy Bodkin
<b>American Legion Post 208</b>	<b>Delegate</b> – Greg Padovani <b>Alternate</b> – Dale Berg
<b>American Legion Post 216</b>	<b>Delegate</b> – Kevin Ake <b>Alternate</b> – Ray Ortiz

**American Legion Post 335**

**Delegate** – Lorenzo Fiorentino  
**Alternate** – Edward Castaneda

**American Legion Post 525**

**Delegate** – Brian Mulcrone  
**Alternate** – William Starr

**American Legion Post 541**

**Delegate** – Megan Gill  
**Alternate** – Tom Benson

**American Legion Post 615**

**Delegate** – Ken McClory  
**Alternate** – John Kaminecki

**American Legion Post 623**

**Delegate** – Paul M. Knudston  
**Alternate** – Byron Watson

**American Legion Post 800**

**Delegate** – Rochelle Crump  
**Alternate** – Ron M. Taylor

**American Legion Post 915**

**Delegate** – Gary Whyte  
**Alternate** – Cardale Melton

**American Legion Post 923**

**Delegate** – George Mulvaney  
**Alternate** – Clemente Rodriguez

**American Legion Post 943**

**Delegate** – John Steciw  
**Alternate** – Michael Chyterbok

**American Legion Post 974**

**Delegate** – Anthony Siciliano  
**Alternate** – George Horn

**American Legion Post 1983**

**Delegate** – Mark Kwiatkowski  
**Alternate** – Maureen Magnifico

**American Legion Post 1987**

**Delegate** – Charles Henderson  
**Alternate** – Frank B. Thomas III

**AMVETS Post 66**

**Delegate** – James Schultz

**Alternate** – John “Dutch” DeGroot

**AMVETS Post 268**

**Delegate** – Eddie Brown, Jr.

**Alternate** – Richard Nielson

**Jewish War Veterans**

**Delegate** – Dr. Jerry Field

**Alternate** – Howard Goldstein

**Marine Corps League Det. 072**

**Delegate** – Darnell Myatt

**Alternate** – George Mulvaney

**Marine Corps League Det. 553**

**Delegate** – Randall L. Tyner

**Alternate** – VACANT

**MOAA**

**Delegate** – John DeReu

**Alternate** – VACANT

**Navy Club of Chicago Post 69**

**Delegate** – Kevin Barszcz

**Alternate** – Leslie Rodriguez

**PVA Vaughan Chapter**

**Delegate** – Robert Arciola

**Alternate** – Anthony Powell

**VVA Chapter 242**

**Delegate** – Kevin Calkins

**Alternate** – VACANT

**VFW Post 311**

**Delegate** – Bill Browne

**Alternate** – Aretha Spurlock

**VFW Post 981**

**Delegate** – Timothy Delaney

**Alternate** – Matthew Voss

**VFW Post 1337**

**Delegate** – Wayne K. Kern

**Alternate** – Al Hopfer

**VFW Post 2202**

**Delegate** – John Healy  
**Alternate** – Joseph Wein

**VFW Post 2868**

**Delegate** – Carlos Medina  
**Alternate** – Eric Morales

**VFW Post 3579**

**Delegate** – Ramon Prieto  
**Alternate** – Tom Davidson

**VFW Post 5979**

**Delegate** – Richard Wojewnik  
**Alternate** – David Ruiz

**VFW Post 7186**

**Delegate** – Thomas J. Hughes  
**Alternate** – Brian Beatty

**VFW Post 8322**

**Delegate** – Paul J. Bezazian  
**Alternate** – Frank Gutierrez

**VFW Post 9284**

**Delegate** – Arthur J. Ellingsen  
**Alternate** – Wallace Campbell

**VFW Post 10236**

**Delegate** – Matthew Jaeger  
**Alternate** – Jim Ossey

**STATE CHARTERED MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS:**

**CVO**

**Delegate** – Larry Nazimek  
**Alternate** – Russel Hopkins

**NWVU**

**Delegate** – Rochelle Crump  
**Alternate** – Roy M. Taylor



## VII. OFFICE SUMMARY



*Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County Office – 1100 S. Hamilton Ave. Chicago, IL. 60612*

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County office is located in the lower level of the Cook County Temporary Juvenile Detention Center Building.

The VACCC is currently staffed by a team of three full-time members:

- **Superintendent**  
Elizabeth D. Soto
- **Executive Assistant/Office Manager/ Assistance Coordinator**  
Vanessa Meadows
- **Director of Finance /Assistance Coordinator**  
Peter Bencak
- **Communications and Outreach Coordinator**  
VACANT

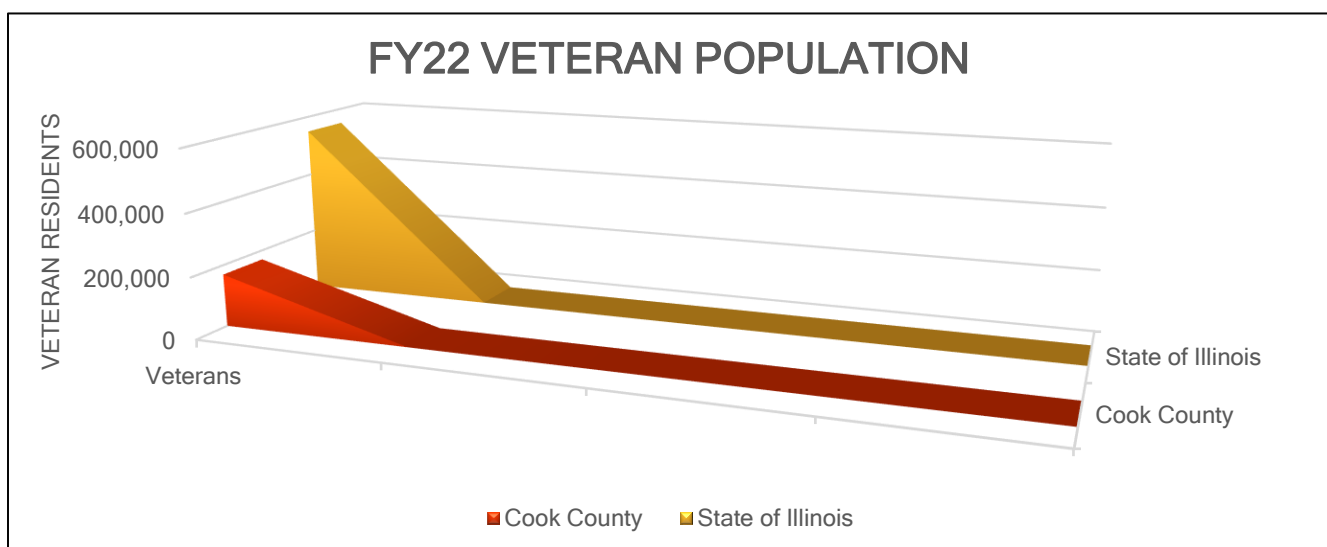
These committed professionals are dedicated to serving the needs of the Cook County Veteran population with their expertise, compassion, and unwavering commitment. Their collective efforts ensure that the VACCC office operates smoothly and efficiently, providing timely assistance and support to the Veterans and their families who seek their services.

The three full-time staff members work collaboratively to fulfill the mission of the VACCC and deliver the essential services that the Cook County Veteran community rely on. Their roles may encompass a range of responsibilities, such as eligibility determination, financial assistance administration, outreach efforts, coordination of non-financial services, and advocacy for Veterans' rights and benefits.

With their extensive knowledge and experience in serving Veterans, these dedicated individuals play a vital role in supporting the unique needs of the Cook County Veteran community. Their professionalism and dedication contribute to the VACCC's effectiveness in providing the necessary resources and assistance to Veterans and their families.

The staff members of the VACCC office have been entrusted with the responsibility of delivering direct financial assistance and outreach services to the entire Cook County Veteran population. As of FY22, the State of Illinois was home to approximately 550,000+ Veterans.

Within this population, Cook County accounted for over one-fourth, with an estimated 170,000+ identifying as Veteran residents. This substantial number highlights the significance of the VACCC's role in serving a significant portion of the Veteran community in Illinois.



*Veterans by State 2022.* <https://worldpopulationreview.com>

With this awareness of the sizable Veteran population in Cook County, the VACCC recognizes the significant responsibility and opportunity it has to support and serve the Veteran community and is dedicated to providing comprehensive support, leveraging its resources, and maximizing the benefits accessible to Veterans in the county. This distinction is a testament to Cook County's rich history, diverse population, and the VACCC's role as a hub for military service members transitioning back to civilian life.

The fact that Cook County houses the largest Veteran population in the State of Illinois underscores the significance and importance of the VACCC's services. With such a substantial number of Veterans residing in the county, the VACCC plays a crucial role in providing vital support, advocacy, and resources to this large and diverse Veteran community.

Cook County's status as the leading county for Veteran residents reflects the area's commitment to honoring and supporting those who have selflessly served our country. With the support from Cook County, the VACCC and staff stand ready to meet the unique needs and challenges faced by Cook County's Veteran population, ensuring they receive the assistance and benefits they have rightfully earned through their honorable military service.

Through dedication, the VACCC serves as a vital resource and advocate for the diverse Veteran community, striving to improve the lives of Veterans and their families. Their commitment to comprehensive support reflects the county's gratitude for the sacrifices made by Veterans and their importance to the local community.

## VIII. OFFICE STAFF

Expanding the staff at the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County is crucial to adequately meet the growing and diverse needs of our Veteran population. The current three full-time staff members have been diligently working to serve the Veteran community, but the increasing demand for services and the complexity of issues faced by Veterans require additional resources and expertise.

By expanding the staff, we can enhance our capacity to provide comprehensive and timely assistance to a larger number of Veterans. With a broader team, we can ensure that no Veteran goes unattended or experiences delays in accessing the support they require. An expanded staff would enable us to improve efficiency, reduce waiting times, and deliver a higher level of personalized care to each Cook County Veteran.

Moreover, an increased staff size allows for specialization and the ability to address the diverse needs of Veterans more effectively. Each staff member can focus on specific areas such as benefits coordination, housing, transportation and employment assistance, Veteran Claims, plus much more. This specialization enables us to provide a more comprehensive range of services and expert guidance tailored to the unique circumstances and challenges faced by our Veteran community.

By investing in an expanded staff, we demonstrate our commitment to fulfilling our mission and serving the Cook County Veteran population with the utmost dedication and care. It is through the collective efforts of a larger team that we can better honor and support the Veterans who have selflessly served our country. With an expanded staff, we can build a stronger foundation for meeting the evolving needs of our Veterans and ensuring their well-being and success in civilian life.

The VACCC is proposing a total of twenty positions for the Fiscal Year 2024. Four of these positions will account for the existing staff members, ensuring their continued involvement and expertise. The additional sixteen positions are intended as valuable additions to our team, strengthening our capacity to effectively serve and support the needs of Cook County's Veteran population.

## CURRENT FY23-FY24 VACCC POSITIONS

POSITION TITLES	POSITION FUNCTION	RECOMMENDED SALARY
<b>Superintendent</b>	A pivotal role that is responsible for the development, implementation, and supervision of VACCC programs and activities. Responsible for managing the office, implementing programs, advocacy for Veterans, resource allocation and management, strategic planning and ensuring the smooth operation of the VACCC. Works closely with VACCC staff, legislators, and stakeholders to improve services and support for Cook County Veterans.	\$ 120,000.00
<b>Director of Finance</b>	A significant role in maintaining financial accuracy, ensuring compliance, and providing the necessary financial reporting for the VACCC. Responsible for all financial reporting, including expenditure control, compliance management, budget management, financial planning and forecasting.	\$ 75,000.00
<b>Executive Assistant</b>	Provides management support for the office operations and performing the duties of an assistance coordinator as required. Coordinates special projects, compiles information and completes complex reports. Handler of sensitive and confidential matters at all levels and maintains a high level of professionalism, tact, and diplomacy.	\$ 65,000.00
<b>Communications &amp; Outreach Coordinator</b>	The Outreach Coordinator's role is crucial in expanding the reach and impact of the VACCC by effectively communicating and engaging with various stakeholders, implementing outreach strategies, and fostering partnerships that enhance the VACCC's services and programs.	\$ 61,000.00

Sustaining current VACCC staff is of paramount importance for the overall success and stability of the VACCC. Sustaining current staff contributes to organizational stability, cost-effectiveness, employee morale, teamwork, and customer satisfaction.

By investing in the development, recognition, and retention of the VACCC's existing employees, the county can reap the benefits of a skilled and engaged workforce, ultimately driving their success and growth.

## PROPOSED FY24 ADDITIONAL VACCC POSITIONS

PROPOSED POSITION TITLES	POSITION FUNCTION	RECOMMENDED SALARY
<b>Business Manager</b>	Overseer of the business operations who will provide strategic direction and guidance to the VACCC personnel, fostering a collaborative and high-performing work environment. Will develop and implement operational plans aligned with the VACCC's goals and objectives, ensuring effective utilization of resources as well as growth and improvement through the development and implementation of innovative business strategies.	\$ 70,000.00
<b>Financial Analyst</b>	A crucial role within the organization, responsible for analyzing business and financial data to support the decision-making processes. Working closely with the Director of Finance, the Financial Analyst assists in creating financial models, developing financial plans, and preparing reports for organizational leadership. By analyzing industry trends and providing recommendations, the Financial Analyst plays a key role in driving strategic financial initiatives and ensuring the organization's financial success.	\$ 60,000.00
<b>Administrative Assistant</b>	A pivotal role within the organization, responsible for providing comprehensive administrative support to ensure smooth operations. This includes answering phone calls, scheduling meetings, supporting visitors, and carrying out various administrative duties such as filing, typing, copying, binding, and scanning. The Administrative Assistant also serves as a backup to the assistance coordinators, stepping in as needed to provide additional support.	\$ 55,000.00
<b>Outreach Coordinator</b>	A vital role in supporting Veteran community events and relief efforts, aimed at assisting Veterans with their needs and connecting them with the services and resources provided by the VACCC. The Outreach Coordinator actively engages with Veterans and their families, providing them with information about VACCC programs and resources to ensure they receive the support they require.	\$ 55,000.00
<b>Assistance Coordinator (x2)</b>	Responsible for assessing and disbursing all Veteran requests for emergency financial assistance. As the primary point of contact for Veterans seeking financial support, the Assistance Coordinator plays a critical role in evaluating the eligibility of requests and ensuring timely disbursement of funds to address emergency needs.	\$ 55,000.00

## PROPOSED FY24 VACCC POSITIONS Continued

PROPOSED POSITION TITLES	POSITION FUNCTION	RECOMMENDED SALARY
<b>Veterans Service Officer Supervisor</b>	Responsible for supervising and directing a team of Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) engaged in obtaining, compiling, and presenting information pertaining to VA claims for benefits. The Veteran Service Officer Supervisor plays a crucial role in ensuring the effective delivery of services to Veterans by providing guidance, support, and oversight to VACCC, VSOs.	\$ 70,000.00
<b>Veterans Service Officer (x7)</b>	The Veteran Service Officer (VSO) is a crucial role within the organization, responsible for assisting Veterans in filing service-connected disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VSO also provides support to Veterans in obtaining benefits related to vocational rehabilitation, VA Home Loans, education, insurance, burial benefits, and non-service-connected pension benefits. The VSO plays a vital role in ensuring that Veterans receive the benefits they are entitled to and provides guidance and advocacy throughout the claims process.	\$ 60,000.00
<b>VET-TEC Program Supervisor</b>	The Vet Tec Supervisor plays a critical role in overseeing and managing the VetTEC® program, which supports active duty and transitioning Servicemembers and Veterans in translating their technical skills from military occupational specialties into civilian jobs. The program focuses on helping individuals gain industry recognized SpaceTEC®, CertTEC®, and ASTM NCATT credentials desired in the fields of aviation, aerospace, and technology. The Vet Tec Supervisor provides leadership, guidance, and support to ensure the effective implementation and success of the program.	\$ 60,000.00
<b>VET-TEC Program Operator</b>	The Vet Tec Coordinator facilitates the VetTEC® program, which helps individuals gain industry-recognized credentials. The Vet Tec Coordinator acts as a guide and resource for participants, providing guidance, coordination, and support throughout the program.	\$ 50,000.00

Investing in increasing staff at an organization like the VACCC have several significant benefits in assisting Veterans who are requesting for assistance:

*Improved Responsiveness:* With increased staff, the VACCC can respond to Veterans' requests for assistance more promptly. Reduced wait times and quicker access to support services can

make a crucial difference in resolving urgent financial, housing, or other assistance needs.

*Enhanced Support and Guidance:* Additional staff members can provide personalized attention and guidance to each Veteran seeking assistance. They can take the time to understand individual circumstances, recommend appropriate resources and offer tailored solutions to address specific needs.

*Expanded Outreach and Availability:* With a larger workforce, the VACCC can expand its outreach efforts and be available to assist Veterans more frequently. This can include extended operating hours, increased availability for appointments, and outreach to underserved Veteran populations.

*Comprehensive Case Management:* Increased staffing allows for better case management, ensuring that each Veteran's situation is well-documented and monitored throughout their journey with the VACCC. This approach facilitates continuity of care and a comprehensive approach to addressing Veterans' ongoing needs.

*Specialized Expertise:* Additional staff members can be hired with specialized expertise. This diversification of skills allows the VACCC to cater to a broader range of Veterans' needs effectively.

*Capacity for Program Expansion:* With more staff, the VACCC can expand existing programs or introduce new initiatives to address emerging needs within the Veteran community. This flexibility enables the organization to adapt to changing circumstances and continuously improve its services.

*Reduced Administrative Burden:* A larger workforce can alleviate administrative burdens, allowing staff members to focus more on directly assisting Veterans. This streamlining of operations improve efficiency and the overall quality of service delivery.

*Long-Term Sustainability:* Investing in staff is an investment in the VACCC's long-term sustainability. Well-trained and dedicated personnel contribute to organizational stability, ensuring the continued support and assistance for Veterans in the years to come. Increased staff leads to improved responsiveness, expanded outreach, enhanced support, and the ability to provide comprehensive care and assistance to Veterans seeking help.



## IX. OFFICE SPACE

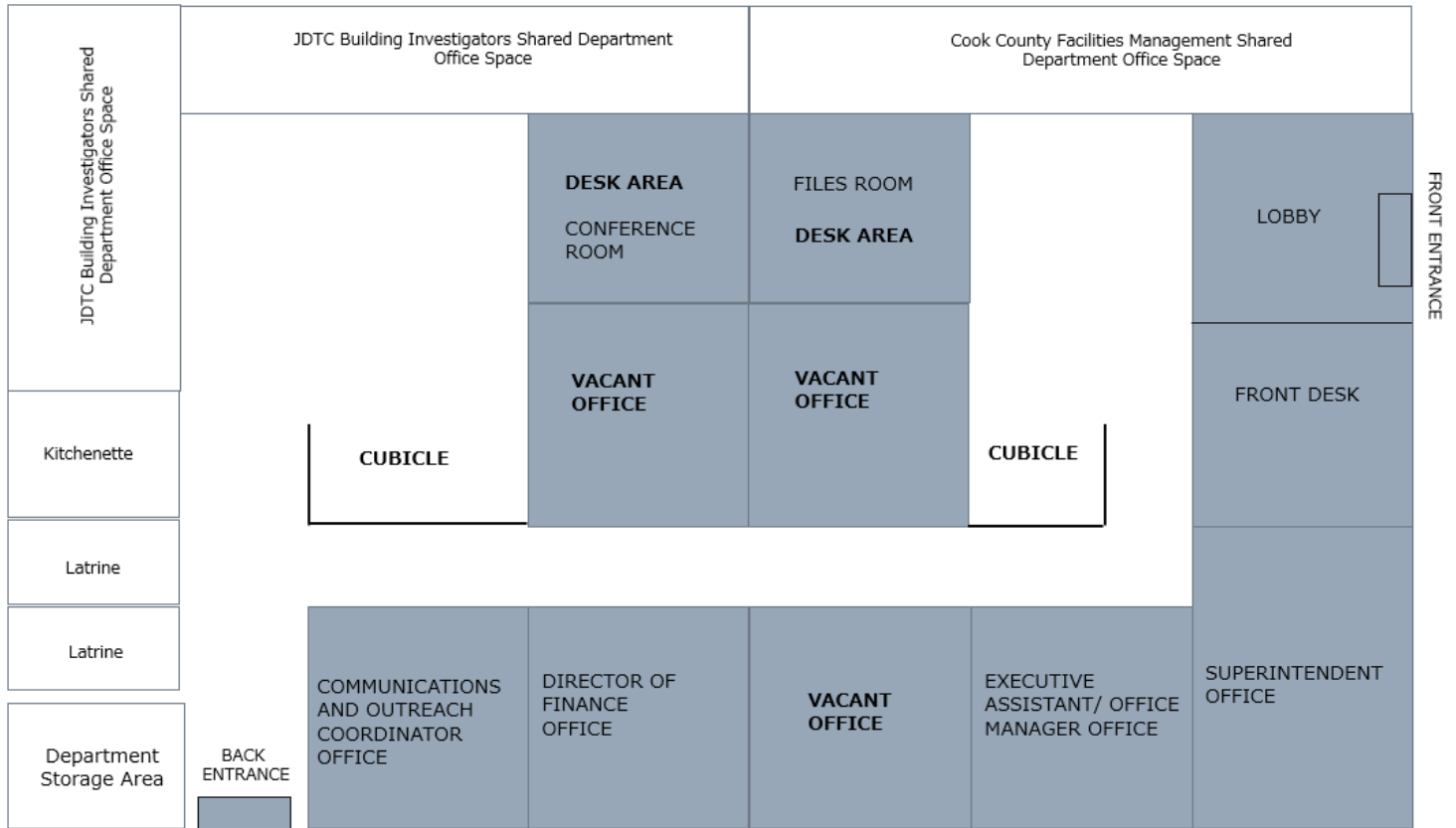
The VACCC recognizes the need for appropriate space to accommodate the proposed staff expansion. As we aim to hire additional personnel to meet the growing demands of serving our Veteran population, it is essential to ensure a conducive and functional work environment for our team.

However, until additional space can be allocated, the VACCC has proactively explored innovative solutions to address the current and future staffing needs. Within our existing office space, we have implemented strategic utilization of available areas to maximize workspace efficiency. By reconfiguring the layout and optimizing our resources, we have created designated workspaces to accommodate the current staff and potential new hires.

In addition, the VACCC has fostered strong partnerships with committed community organizations who have generously agreed in advance to provide space as needed. These trusted partners understand the importance of our mission and have offered their support by offering temporary or alternate locations to house our staff members. This collaborative approach enables us to adapt flexibly to our staffing requirements and ensures uninterrupted delivery of services to our Veterans.

As we continue to expand our services and increase our staff, securing appropriate space remains a top priority. The VACCC is actively engaged in exploring long-term solutions, including securing dedicated office space within Cook County facilities that aligns with our operational needs. We are committed to providing a comfortable and functional workspace that enables our team to carry out their vital work effectively and efficiently in serving the Veterans of Cook County.

# CURRENT VACCC FY23 OFFICE SPACE LAYOUT

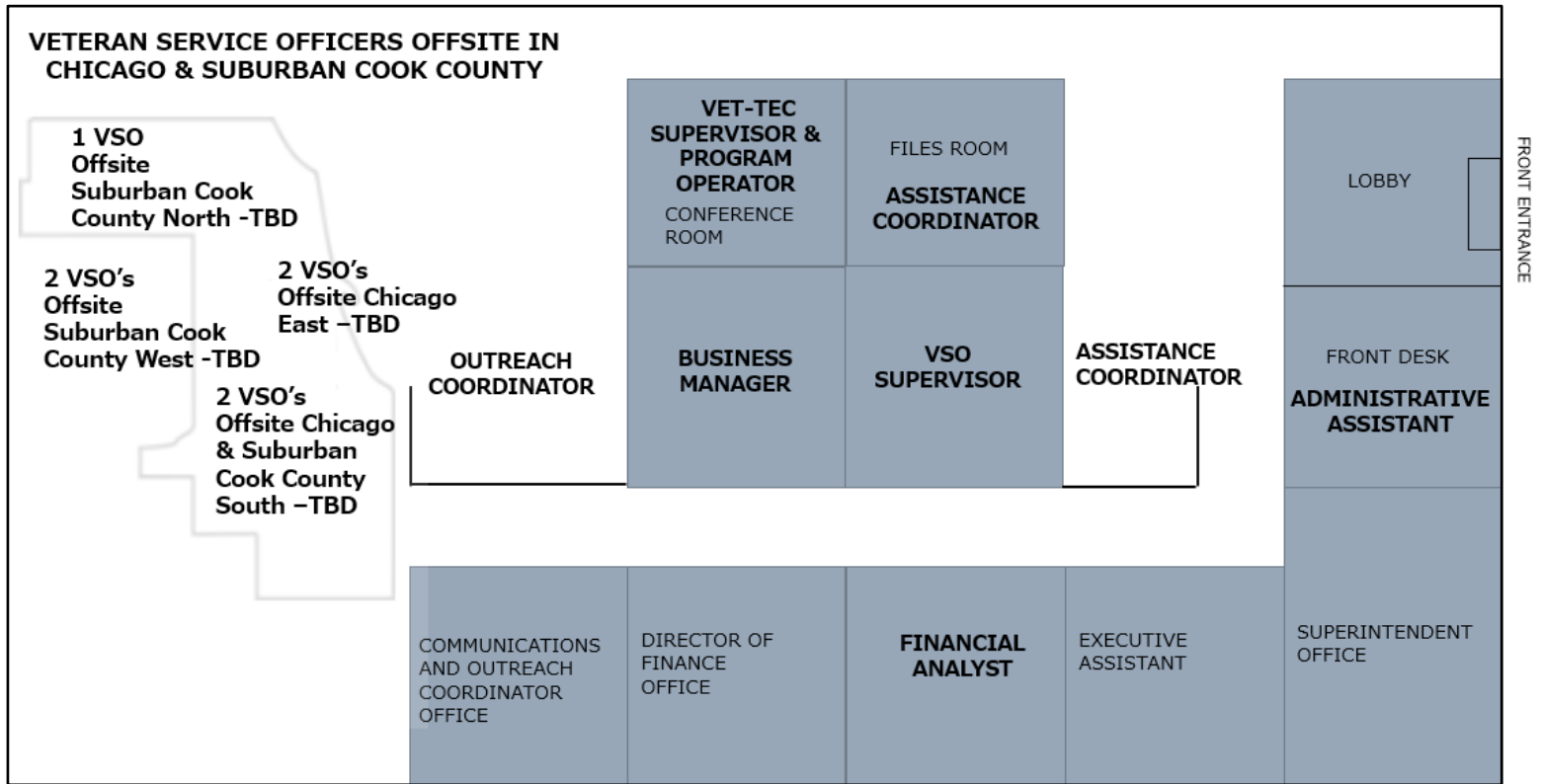


Presented here is the existing layout of the VACCC office, showcasing several vacant offices and areas that hold immense potential for accommodating future staff members.

By strategically utilizing these spaces, we can optimize our resources to benefit the Veteran community. As we expand our team, it is essential to secure the necessary space to ensure seamless service delivery to Veterans across Cook County.

The addition of more staff not only requires more physical space but also enables us to provide a broader range of services to meet the needs of our esteemed Veterans and the wider Veteran population in Cook County.

## PROPOSED VACCC FY24 OFFICE SPACE LAYOUT



Presented here is the proposed VACCC FY24 layout, carefully designed to optimize the utilization of every vacant office space. As depicted, our plan aims to maximize the available space, ensuring efficient operations and seamless service delivery. Additionally, as part of our expansion efforts, we project placing the excess seven Veteran Service Officers strategically throughout Cook County, specifically in the Suburban Cook areas.

This strategic placement will allow us to provide dedicated VA claims assistance to Veterans residing in those regions, ensuring convenient access to the support they need. Our goal is to enhance our reach and effectiveness in serving the Veteran community by providing personalized assistance where it is most needed.

## **X. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

In addition to the established financial services and benefits already offered by the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County, the following proposed budget increase requests outline the funding required to implement new social services provided to Cook County Veterans and their families for the Fiscal Year 2024.

These new initiatives, along with the current services provided have been thoughtfully designed to provide substantial support and aim to address the unique needs of our Veteran community.

### **PROPOSED ADDITIONAL VACCC SERVICES FOR FY24**

#### **Hygiene Card Assistance**

Hygiene Card Assistance is a comprehensive initiative aimed at providing essential hygiene products and support to qualified Veterans and their qualifying dependents.

This program serves the dual purpose of ensuring compliance with basic service needs and expressing our sincere gratitude to the brave individuals who have served our nation. The proposed budget will facilitate the provision of hygiene cards valued at \$100.00 each for eligible Veterans and their dependents, thereby positively impacting the health and welfare of our valued beneficiaries.

#### **Program Objectives:**

- To provide hygiene cards valued at \$100.00 to each qualified Veteran and their qualifying dependents.
- To promote compliance with basic services by offering access to essential hygiene products.
- To express appreciation and support for our Veterans and their families through this meaningful resource.

## Budget Summary:

The total funding required for the successful implementation of the Hygiene Card Assistance Service is outlined below:

Service to be Rendered:	Hygiene Gift Card
Monetary Value of Individual Card:	\$100.00
General Merchandise Retailer:	Target Corporation
Frequency of Disbursement to Veteran and qualifying Dependent(s):	Once, every 12-month time period.
Estimated Total Requests:	1,500
Estimated Total Cost:	\$150,000.00

The proposed budget is based on thorough market research and consideration of the target audience's needs. By providing hygiene cards to qualified Veterans, we aim to ensure a comprehensive approach to improving the well-being of our beneficiaries.

Additionally, recognizing the integral role played by Veterans' families, this benefit will be extended to their qualifying dependents as well. Each dependent will be eligible for a hygiene card, ensuring the entire family's well-being is catered for.

The VACCC firmly believes that this initiative will have a profound positive impact on the lives of those who have selflessly served our nation as the Hygiene Card Assistance will not only address fundamental hygiene but also encourages individuals to access and utilize essential services in a consistent and sustainable manner.

Approval of the proposed budget will enable the successful execution of this essential program and with Cook County's support the VACCC can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our Veteran community.

### **Budget Justification:**

The approval of the Hygiene Card Assistance can provide a return on investment (ROI) to Cook County, through several mechanisms:

- *Boosting Local Economy:*

By providing hygiene cards with a total value of \$100.00 to qualified Veterans and their qualifying dependents, the program encourages spending within Cook County. As these beneficiaries utilize their hygiene cards to purchase essential products and services from local retailers, it stimulates economic activity within the county. The increased consumer spending can lead to higher sales tax revenues, benefiting the local government.

- *Generating Sales Tax Revenue:*

The purchases made by Veterans and their families using the hygiene cards will attract sales tax on eligible products within Cook County. A portion of the sales tax collected goes directly to the county's revenue, contributing to essential public services, infrastructure development, and other community initiatives.

- *Increasing Foot Traffic to Local Businesses:*

As Veterans and their dependents visit Target stores to redeem their hygiene cards, it drives foot traffic to these businesses. This increased foot traffic not only supports the local economy but also raises the visibility and potential customer base for these establishments, leading to potential growth and sustainability for businesses within Cook County, Il.

- *Addressing Basic Needs and Reducing Burden on Social Services:*

By providing hygiene cards to Veterans and their families, the program helps address basic needs related to hygiene and personal care. As a result, the burden on social services and assistance programs might be reduced, leading to potential cost savings for the county in managing and providing emergency aid to those in need.

- *Positive Public Relations and Image:*

The Hygiene Card Assistance will demonstrate the county's commitment to supporting its Veterans and their families. This positive gesture can enhance the county's public relations and image, showcasing Cook County as a caring and supportive community that values and honors its Veterans.

- *Promoting Community Integration:*

The program fosters a sense of community and inclusivity, bringing together businesses, Veterans, and residents. This sense of unity can lead to increased civic engagement, volunteerism, and community involvement, all of which contribute to a stronger and more connected county.

- *Long-term Benefits:*

While the immediate focus of the program is on meeting the hygiene needs of Veterans and their families, the long-term benefits of supporting Veterans' well-being can be significant. Healthier and happier Veterans are more likely to participate actively in the workforce and local community, contributing to economic growth and stability in the county.

In summary, the approval of the Hygiene Card Assistance not only serves as a meaningful resource of support for Veterans and their families but also has the potential to generate a return on investment for Cook County. By facilitating local spending, increasing tax revenues, and promoting community well-being, the program can lead to a more prosperous and interconnected county.

## Vehicle Gas Card Assistance

The goal of the Vehicle Gas Card Assistance is to ensure transportation security for Veterans residing in areas with limited access to public transportation. Additionally, the program acknowledges Veterans who rely on personal vehicles for, school, childcare, medical and work-related purposes, thus offering a benefit that further assists Veterans and their families.

### Program Objectives:

- To provide Vehicle Gas Cards valued at \$100.00 each to qualified Veterans.
- To enhance transportation security for Veterans living in areas with limited public transportation options.
- To support Veterans who utilize personal vehicles for educational or work-related purposes.

### Budget Summary:

This Vehicle Gas Card is intended to assist Veterans in managing transportation costs, ensuring they can maintain reliable access to necessary services and employment opportunities. By alleviating the financial burden of fuel expenses, Veterans can more easily access essential services and amenities.

Veterans who rely on personal vehicles for work-related purposes will benefit from the gas card assistance, enabling them to commute efficiently and maintain employment stability. The Vehicle Gas Card Assistance represents a meaningful initiative designed to assist qualified Veterans with their transportation needs. By providing \$100.00 gas cards to eligible Veterans, the program addresses both transportation challenges and work-related expenses, contributing to the well-being and empowerment of our valued Veterans and their families.



Service to be Rendered:	Vehicle Gas Card
Monetary Value of Individual Card:	\$100.00
General Merchandise Retailer:	Shell plc
Frequency of Disbursement to Veteran	1 card in FY24 as a trial base to gain a data projection for the following FY.
Estimated Total Requests:	500
Estimated Total Cost:	\$50,000.00

### **Budget Justification:**

The approval of the Vehicle Gas Card Assistance can provide a return on investment (ROI) to the county, through various channels:

- *Increased Local Business Revenue:*

As qualified Veterans utilize the gas cards at Shell Gas Stations within Cook County, it stimulates local business revenue. The funds spent on fuel purchases directly benefit the participating Shell Gas Stations, leading to increased sales and potential growth in their businesses. This, in turn, contributes to the county's overall economic development.

- *Sales Tax Revenue Generation:*

Each fuel purchase made by the qualified Veterans using the gas cards at Shell Gas Stations attracts sales tax. A portion of this sales tax revenue is directed back to Cook County's coffers, providing a direct financial return on the investment made in supporting the Veterans through the gas card assistance.

- *Boost to Employment and Economic Activity:*

As local businesses, including Shell Gas Stations, experience increased demand due to the program, they may require additional staff to accommodate the influx of customers. This can lead to job creation and a positive impact on local employment rates, further contributing to the county's economic vitality.

- *Reduced Reliance on Social Services:*

By assisting qualified Veterans with transportation costs through the gas card assistance, the county indirectly reduces the burden on social services that may have otherwise been needed to address transportation-related needs. The cost savings in social service expenditures can be redirected to other essential county initiatives.

- *Promotion of Local Businesses and Partnerships:*

The Vehicle Gas Card Assistance fosters partnerships between the county and local businesses like Shell Gas Stations. Such partnerships strengthen the local business ecosystem and may lead to future collaborative initiatives that benefit both the private sector and the county.

- *Enhanced Community Support and Image:*

The Gas Card Assistance demonstrates the county's commitment to supporting its Veterans, improving the overall quality of life for those who have served the nation. Such initiatives contribute to a positive public perception of the county's care for its Veterans and the community's well-being, bolstering the county's reputation.

- *Indirect Economic Multiplier Effect:*

As the Gas Card Assistance helps Veterans maintain access to essential services and work opportunities, it supports their overall financial stability. When Veterans are financially secure, they are more likely to participate actively in the local economy, contributing to a positive multiplier effect that benefits Cook County as a whole.

Overall, the approval of the Vehicle Gas Card Assistance not only addresses transportation needs for qualified Veterans but also generates a return on investment for Cook County. The funds spent within the county through the gas card program create a positive economic impact, promoting local business growth, generating sales tax revenue, and reducing the demand on social services.

The program's support for Veterans fosters a stronger sense of community and highlights the county's commitment to the well-being of its residents. As a result, investing in the Vehicle Gas Card Assistance aligns with the county's goals of promoting economic growth, supporting local businesses, and enhancing the overall quality of life for its Veteran population and the community as a whole.

### **Cell Phone/ Land Line Bill Assistance**

The proposed Cell Phone/Landline Bill Assistance aims to benefit the esteemed Veteran community by providing essential support with their communication expenses. The program's objective is to alleviate financial burdens related to cell phone and landline bills, ensuring seamless connectivity and enhanced communication opportunities for our valued Veterans.

### **Budget Summary:**

The assistance ensures that Veterans can stay connected with their families, support networks, and essential services without undue financial strain. Improved communication fosters social connectivity and reduces feelings of isolation, especially for Veterans who may be living far from their loved ones or facing mobility challenges. Reliable communication is vital for accessing healthcare services, Veteran support programs, and other essential resources. The assistance will also promote mental well-being and reduces stress, benefiting Veterans' overall quality of life.

Service to be Rendered:	Cell Phone/ Land Line Bill Assistance
Monetary Value of Individual Card:	Up to \$ 100.00
Frequency of Disbursement to Veteran	Once, every 12-month time period.
Estimated Total Requests:	1,000
Estimated Total Cost:	\$100,000.00

### **Budget Justification:**

The Cell Phone/Landline Bill Assistance Program represents a vital initiative designed to support our Veteran community in enhancing their communication and connectivity. The approval of the Cell Phone/Landline Bill Assistance Program can provide a return on investment (ROI) to the county, specifically Cook County, through various avenues:

- *Economic Stimulus:*

The Cell Phone/ Land Line Assistance will inject funds directly into the local economy. As Veterans utilize the financial assistance to pay their bills, the money circulates within Cook County, benefitting local telecommunication providers and related businesses.

- *Sales Tax Revenue:*

The funds allocated for the Cell Phone/Landline Bill Assistance are channeled back into the county when Veterans use the assistance to pay their bills. The sales taxes associated with these bill payments generate additional revenue for Cook County, further contributing to the county's budget.

- *Reduced Dependence on Social Services:*

By providing financial assistance for communication expenses, the program reduces the financial burden on Veterans and their families. This, in turn, may lessen their reliance on certain social services and public assistance programs, leading to potential cost savings for the county.

- *Enhanced Social Connectivity:*

Improved communication access through the program can positively impact Veterans' mental well-being and overall quality of life. Veterans who feel more connected to their support networks and the community are more likely to participate actively in local events and activities, fostering a stronger sense of community and social cohesion.

- *Workforce Productivity:*

Reliable communication is essential for Veterans seeking employment opportunities or engaging in entrepreneurship. By assisting Veterans with their cell phone and landline bills, the program may contribute to their increased workforce participation and productivity, leading to a more prosperous local economy.

- *Indirect Impact on Local Businesses:*

The program's financial assistance can indirectly benefit other local businesses. As Veterans experience reduced financial stress related to their communication expenses, they may have more disposable income to spend on other goods and services within Cook County.

In summary, the approval of the Cell Phone/Landline Bill Assistance Program not only offers crucial support to the Veteran community but also generates a return on investment for Cook County. The funds invested in assisting Veterans with their communication expenses positively impact the local economy, promote social well-being, and potentially lead to cost savings in other areas.

The assistance reinforces Cook County's commitment to supporting its Veterans, creating a sense of unity and gratitude within the community. The return on investment, both in economic terms and community well-being, showcases the long-term benefits of investing in the welfare of the Veteran population and the overall growth of Cook County.

### **Internet Bill Assistance**

The Internet Bill Assistance objective is to provide financial assistance to eligible Veterans with outstanding internet bills, ensuring continuous connectivity and access to critical online resources. To offer financial assistance to qualified Veterans with past due internet bills, fosters uninterrupted connectivity and facilitating access to online services and opportunities for the Veteran community.

### **Budget Summary:**

The payment assistance towards Veterans' past due internet bills seeks to provide continued connectivity to ensure that Veterans can maintain reliable and continuous access to the internet which is crucial for communication, information, and employment opportunities. Uninterrupted internet accessibility enables Veterans to access essential online resources, including healthcare services, education, and various Veteran support programs.

The assistance promotes enhanced virtual engagement with Veterans' active participation in virtual communities, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering social connectivity through online platforms. Reliable internet access will also enable Veterans to pursue educational opportunities, online courses, and skills development programs, contributing to their personal and professional growth.

The total funding required for the successful implementation of the Internet Bill Assistance Service is outlined below:

Service to be Rendered:	Internet Bill Assistance
Monetary Value of Individual Card:	\$100.00
Frequency of Disbursement to Veteran	Once, every 12-month time period.
Estimated Total Requests:	1,000
Estimated Total Cost:	\$100,000.00

### **Budget Justification:**

The approval of the Veterans Internet Bill Assistance can provide a return on investment (ROI) to Cook County, through several avenues:

- *Economic Stimulus:*

By offering financial assistance to eligible Veterans with their past due internet bills, the program infuses funds directly into the local economy. As Veterans utilize the assistance to pay their internet bills, the money is directed to local internet service providers within Cook County, thereby supporting local businesses and potentially leading to increased economic activity in the telecommunications sector.

- *Sales Tax Revenue Generation:*

The funds allocated for the Veterans past due internet bills contribute to the county's sales tax revenue when Veterans use the assistance to pay their past due bills. The sales taxes generated from these bill payments become a source of additional revenue for Cook County, contributing to its budget.

- *Enhanced Workforce Productivity:*

With reliable internet access, Veterans can actively participate in remote work opportunities, telecommuting, or online businesses. By assisting Veterans with their internet bills, the program may contribute to increased workforce participation and income, which in turn positively impacts the county's economic growth.

- *Support for Online Businesses:*

As Veterans gain improved access to the internet, they may also engage more with online businesses and services. This increased online activity can benefit local e-commerce and other internet-based enterprises within Cook County, further bolstering the county's economy.

- *Promoting Educational and Entrepreneurial Pursuits:*

Reliable internet access is essential for pursuing educational opportunities and entrepreneurship. By providing the Internet Bill Assistance, it will empower Veterans to pursue online courses, access educational resources, and start online businesses, potentially leading to greater economic diversification and growth in Cook County.

In summary, the approval of the Veterans Internet Bill Assistance not only provides crucial support to Veterans but also generates a return on investment for Cook County. The funds invested in assisting Veterans with their internet bills contribute to the local economy, promote workforce productivity and support online businesses.

The return on investment, both in economic terms and community well-being, highlights the long-term benefits of investing in the welfare of Veterans and the overall growth of Cook County.



These aforementioned, proposed services assistance additions aim to augment the existing financial services and benefits provided by the VACCC, further enriching the support system available to Cook County Veterans. The VACCC assistance has been a cornerstone of support for our Veterans, providing these essential services during these challenging economic times as we continue to move beyond the pandemic.

As the outreach efforts effectively raise awareness of the services and benefits available at the VACCC, we can anticipate an influx of Veterans coming to our office to request assistance. This heightened demand for services is a positive indication that our efforts are reaching those who can benefit from our support, but it also necessitates a proactive approach to accommodate the increased workload.

More Veterans will venture out to seek assistance, necessitating this expansion of services to meet the growing demand. It is crucial to extend and offer additional services to cater to the evolving needs of our Veterans as we believe that by incorporating these new initiatives into our existing benefits provided; we can better address the multifaceted needs of our Veteran community and contribute to their overall success and well-being.

To address the surge in demand, we recognize the importance of developing new programs and expanding existing ones to provide comprehensive support in areas such as housing assistance, communications access, educational resources, and employment opportunities.

Moreover, meeting the growing demands of the Veteran community will require additional staff to ensure that all Veterans receive personalized and timely assistance. By augmenting our team with qualified professionals, we can effectively manage the increased caseload and continue to deliver high-quality services that align with our mission of empowering and supporting our Veteran community.

While the surge in demand may present challenges, it also provides an invaluable opportunity to extend our impact, and bolster our team to better serve the needs of our Veteran community effectively. Through dedication, collaboration, and a commitment to our Veterans, we will navigate this growth phase and continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of those who have selflessly served our nation.

## XI. PROGRAMS



As part of the VACCC's ongoing efforts to empower Veterans with sustainable career opportunities, we propose the implementation of a Vet-Tec Program. With an increased budget for services and staff, it will be possible for the VACCC to partner with the Vet-Tec Program and implement it as one of our departments' flagship programs for Veterans. We believe that this collaboration presents a remarkable opportunity to enhance the support and services we offer to the Veteran community.

The VACCC's mission has always been to provide comprehensive assistance and empower Veterans with the necessary resources to thrive in post-military life. By joining forces with the Vet-Tec Program, we envision creating a formidable platform that equips Veterans with in-demand technology skills that opens new doors to promising career opportunities in the ever-evolving tech industry.

Through this strategic partnership, the VACCC aims to address the skills gap prevalent in the technology sector while contributing to the economic growth of Cook County. Our commitment to fostering Veterans' well-being aligns perfectly with the Vet-Tec Program's objectives, and together, we can make a profound impact on the lives of those who have served our country.

Incorporating the Vet-Tec Program as one of our departments' core offerings will allow us to facilitate successful civilian transitions for Veterans, support their career aspirations and promote their economic independence.

Vet-Tec stands for, *Veterans Employment Through Technology Education Courses*, and it is a program offered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The program was established to provide eligible Veterans with access to high-tech training and education programs, specifically in the field of information technology (IT) and other technology-related industries

The main objective of the Vet-Tec Program is to help Veterans develop the skills and knowledge necessary to enter or advance in careers within the technology sector. It is designed to address the growing demand for skilled IT professionals while also assisting Veterans in transitioning into civilian life with promising career opportunities.

The following are compelling reasons for funding the Vet-Tec Program, which will provide crucial benefits to Veterans, the community, and the county as a whole:

**Addressing High-Demand Skills Gap:** The technology industry is experiencing rapid growth and continuously evolving, resulting in a high demand for skilled professionals in various IT-related fields. By funding a Vet-Tec Program at the VACCC, we can bridge the skills gap and equip Veterans with in-demand technology skills.

**Empowering Veterans with Promising Career Opportunities:** A Vet-Tec Program offers Veterans the opportunity to gain specialized training in cutting-edge technologies, empowering them with the knowledge and skills to pursue fulfilling careers in the technology sector. By providing access to such training, the VACCC enables Veterans to explore new career paths and transition into high-paying jobs with growth potential.

**Facilitating Successful Civilian Transitions:** Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be challenging for many Veterans. The Vet-Tec Program provides a structured pathway for Veterans to navigate this transition successfully. Through targeted technology education, Veterans can translate their military experience into valuable skills applicable to the civilian job market, fostering a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

**Enhancing Veteran Economic Well-Being:** Investing in the Vet-Tec Program directly contributes to the economic well-being of Veterans. By equipping them with marketable technology skills, we enable Veterans to secure stable employment and achieve financial independence. This, in turn, reduces the likelihood of unemployment and reliance on public assistance programs, benefitting the county's economy.

**Promoting Local Economic Growth:** The Vet-Tec Program at the VACCC can have a positive impact on the local economy. As Veterans train through the program and enter the workforce, they contribute to the growth of local technology companies and industries. The presence of skilled tech professionals can also attract technology companies to the area, promoting economic development and job opportunities.

**Aligning with National Initiatives:** The Vet-Tec Program aligns with national initiatives focused on expanding educational opportunities for Veterans. By offering technology-focused training, the VACCC demonstrates its commitment to supporting Veterans' long-term success and integration into the civilian workforce.

**Fulfilling Veterans' Aspirations:** Many Veterans aspire to pursue careers in the technology industry due to its dynamic nature and potential for personal growth. By funding the Vet-Tec Program, the VACCC can fulfill Veterans' aspirations and provide a platform for them to thrive in an industry, they are passionate about.

Funding a Vet-Tec Program at the VACCC is a strategic investment in our Veteran community's future. By empowering Veterans with high-demand technology skills, we not only support their successful transition to civilian life but also contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of Cook County as a whole.

## XII. PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

The following displays the strategic plans the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County has implemented and intends to expand on by continuing to partner with various local community organizations and agencies. Through these partnerships, the VACCC aims to provide a comprehensive continuum of services to Veterans that extends beyond our current offerings.

By collaborating with organizations such as the Chicago Vet Center, the Social Security Administration (SSA), Hines and Jesse Brown VA Medical Centers, CVLS (Chicago Volunteer Legal Services), and Legal Aid Chicago, we can ensure our Veterans continue to receive direct access to vital services conveniently within the VACCC office. This strategic collaboration is crucial in empowering and supporting our Veteran community more effectively.

Recognizing that some vital services lie beyond our current scope, we propose partnering with esteemed local community organizations and agencies. By bringing these services directly to our office, we aim to create a seamless and convenient experience for Veterans, fostering a continuum of care and support for their diverse needs.

By providing space for our current and future partner organizations within VACCC, Veterans can conveniently access these services during their visits, eliminating the need for multiple appointments at different locations. Having partner organizations on-site fosters seamless coordination between the VACCC and these agencies, enabling prompt referrals and a holistic approach to addressing Veterans' needs.

The VACCC office has become a centralized resource hub, offering a one-stop-shop for Veterans seeking a wide range of services. This integration ensures that Veterans receive comprehensive support in a welcoming and supportive environment. Continuing to partner with local community organizations and agencies will significantly enhance the services offered by the VACCC.

This strategic collaboration reinforces our commitment to empowering and supporting Veteran community and serves as a testament of our dedication to providing exemplary care and resources.

Here a few examples of the benefits of partnering with current local community Organizations:



Weekly collaboration with the Hines VA Medical Centers facilitates direct access to VA services, enabling Veterans to navigate their benefits, medical care, and specialized programs more effectively.

*Hines VA Medical Centers*

By partnering monthly with SSA, the VACCC can provide assistance with benefit claims, disability applications, and other administrative services. This collaboration streamlines the process for Veterans seeking Social Security benefits.

*Social Security Administration (SSA)*



Partnering monthly with CVLS and Legal Aid Chicago provides Veterans with access to attorneys who can assist with issues related to housing, family matters, benefits claims, and more. This partnership empowers Veterans with legal support and safeguards their rights.

*CVLS (Chicago Volunteer Legal Services) and Legal Aid Chicago:*



*Additional VACC Partners (FY23):*

- Aldi Grocery
- Advocate Health Advisors
- Blue Star Families Chicago Chapter
- Chicago V.A. Regional Office
- Chicago Volunteer Legal Services
- City of Berwyn Mayor's Office
- City of Berwyn's Park District
- City of Berwyn's Police Department
- City of Chicago Park District
- City of Chicago Police Lodge 7
- City of Chicago Water Department
- Cook County Assessor's Office
- Cook County Clerk's Office
- Commonwealth Edison
- Costco
- Don Doty Georgia Doty Health
- Edward J. Hines Jr. V.A. Hospital
- Goodman Theatre
- Habitat for Humanity Chicago
- Help Heal Veterans
- IACVAC
- Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs
- Illinois Joining Forces
- Innervoice
- Intergovernmental Task Force on Veteran Affairs
- Jesse Brown V.A. Hospital
- Legal Aid Chicago
- Marine Corps Toys For Tots Program
- National Personnel Records Center
- Nicor Gas Company
- Of Color, Inc.
- Office of the Chief Judge | Illinois Circuit Court of Cook County | Veterans Treatment Court
- State of Illinois Attorney General's Office
- State of Illinois Department of Employment Security
- Town of Cicero Military Families
- UMAP
- UniteUs
- V.A. Community Resource and Referral Center
- VBC Foundation
- Vet Center – Chicago
- Vet Center – Forest Park
- Ventra CTA/ PACE
- Vietnam War Commemorative Partner
- Volunteers of America

## XIII. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In FY22, the Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County expended over fifty percent (\$269,254.67) of its total budget (\$471,270.00) on impactful, direct financial Assistance to Cook County Veterans and their families. Through these essential services, the VACCC was able to assist 1,282 Veterans, significantly alleviating their financial hardships.

The direct impact of these financial assistance programs has brought stability, security, and peace of mind to Veterans and their families, reinforcing the VACCC's role as a reliable and essential resources within the community.

The accomplishments in FY2022 underscore the VACCC's mission to honor and serve those who have served our nation. Moving forward, the VACCC remains steadfast in its commitment to providing comprehensive support, making a positive and lasting difference in the lives of our Veterans by adding more pertinent services, programs and staff to facilitate the ongoing needs of the Veteran community.

Moving into FY23, the VACCC's continued its dedication to serving Veterans. In the first quarter, 375 Veterans received services, and \$74,852.53 was expended on direct assistance. In the second quarter, the number of Veterans assisted increased to 527, and \$120,153.44 was expended on financial support. As of the beginning of the third quarter, in at the closing of the month of June, \$52,640.99 has been allocated to aid 200 Veterans.

In total, during the first, second, and part of the third quarters of FY23, the VACCC has provided \$247,646.96 in direct services to 1,102 Veterans. Projections indicate that the VACCC is on track to expend a total of \$560,623.58 in direct services by the closing of FY23, with \$447,646.96 solely dedicated to direct financial assistance to Veterans.

Considering the remaining five months in FY23, it is evident that the VACCC is poised to not only surpass the total expenditures of the previous FY but, also surpass the number of Veterans who have received assistance. The organization's dedicated efforts and strategic initiatives have resulted in a significant impact on the Veteran community, and the positive trajectory highlights our commitment to continually enhance our support services.



The continuous increase in the number of Veterans seeking assistance and the significant expenditure on direct services stresses the growing demand for support. To address these ongoing needs, the VACCC is seeking to add more pertinent services, programs, and staff. This proactive approach aims to ensure that the organization remains responsive to the evolving requirements of Cook County Veterans and continues to make a positive and lasting difference in their lives.

As FY24 approaches, the VACCC is projecting further budgetary expansion to accommodate the increasing demands for support and to provide a comprehensive continuum of care for Veterans and their families. Through strategic planning and a strong commitment to the mission, the VACCC will continue its essential role as a reliable and vital resource for the esteemed Veteran community in Cook County.

### ***FY23 Budget Breakdown***

<b>1st QTR EXPENDITURES (Veteran Services Only):</b>	<b>2nd QTR EXPENDITURES (Veteran Services Only):</b>
DECEMBER 2022: \$23,539.37	MARCH 2023: \$39,568.23
JANUARY 2023: \$21,841.50	APRIL 2023: \$46,105.16
FEBRUARY 2023: \$29,471.66	MAY 2023: \$34,480.05

<b>3rd QTR EXPENDITURES (Veteran Services Only):</b>	<b>4th QTR EXPENDITURES (Veteran Services Only):</b>
JUNE 2023: \$52,540.00	SEPTEMBER 2023: \$40,000.00 PROJECTED
JULY 2023: \$40,000.00 PROJECTED	OCTOBER 2023: \$40,000.00 PROJECTED
AUGUST 2023: \$40,000.00 PROJECTED	NOVEMBER 2023: \$40,000.00 PROJECTED

<b>TOTAL BUDGET PER QTR:</b>
<b>1st Quarter Actuals: \$128,335.39</b>
<b>2nd Quarter Actuals: \$175,646.20</b>
<b>3rd Quarter Projected: \$134,640.00</b>
<b>4th Quarter Projected: \$122,000.00</b>
<b>ACTUALS + PROJECTED SPEND: \$447,646.96 (Veteran Services Only)</b>
<b>PROJECTED TOTAL SPEND: \$560,623.58</b>

*Proposed FY24 Budget Request*

	<b>PROPOSED BUDGET FY 2023-2024</b>
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Salaries/Wages - Regular EE (20 Essential)	\$ 1,280,094
Salaries/Wages - Part-Time EE	
Mandatory Medicare (1.45% of salaries) - ER	\$ 18,561
Professional Development fees	\$ -
Personnel Service - Training Programs for Staff	\$ 5,000
Transportation and travel expenses	\$ 6,000
<b>Subtotal: Personnel</b>	<b>\$ 1,309,655</b>
<b>CONTRACTUAL SERVICES</b>	
VETERAN DISBURSEMENT ( Mortgage, Rent, Transportation, Utilities, Food, Burial Assistance, Employment Referrals, Other)	\$ 776,290
Communication services	\$ -
Graphics & Reproduction services	\$ 3,000
Mandatory Insurance premiums-fidelity bonds, liability	\$ 250
Mandatory Liability Insurance (directors and Employees) per IGA	\$ -
Contractual Service - Legal (Lawyer on Retainer)	\$ 25,000
Mandatory Amalgamated Bank Fees	\$ 2,500
Payroll /Accounting ADP	\$ -
Postage	\$ 750
Contractual Service - Mandatory Government Tax Filing	\$ 800
Maintenance & Subscription - IAC / VAC	\$ 600
Moving Expense	\$ -
<b>Subtotal: Contractual services for Veterans &amp; minors:</b>	<b>\$ 809,190</b>
<b>OFFICE, SUPPLIES, MATERIALS</b>	
Office Supplies	\$ 8,000
Supplies & Material - Computer Supplies	\$ 13,690
Rental & Leasing	\$ -
General & Contingencies - Water	\$ 400
General & Contingencies - Petty cash (Emergency and reimbursement)	\$ 900
Contractual Service - Website/outreach initial setup and maintenance	\$ 3,000
<b>Subtotal Office supplies,materials, website</b>	<b>\$ 25,990</b>
	1.2%
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$ 2,144,835</b>

	<b>Proposed 2024 New Wage Rate</b>
Superintendent	\$ 57.70
Executive Assistant	\$ 31.25
Director of Finance	\$ 36.05
Comms. & Outreach Coord.	\$ 28.91
Business Manager	\$ 33.65
Financial Analyst	\$ 28.85
Administrative Assistant	\$ 28.85
Outreach Coordinator	\$ 24.00
Assistance Coordinator x2	\$ 52.88
VSO Supervisor	\$ 33.65
VSO's x7	\$ 201.95
VET-TEC Super.	\$ 31.25
VET-TEC Operator	\$ 26.44

\*\*  
\*

<b>Hourly Rate</b>	\$ 615.43
<b>Annual Hours</b>	2080
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,280,094</b>

**PROJECTED ADDITIONAL SERVICES:**  
 Hygiene Cards @ \$100.00 x 1500 Vets & Family (Estimate)  
 Gas Cards @ \$100.00 x 500 Vets (Estimate)  
 Cell / Landline Phones @ 100.00 x 1000 Vets (Estimate)  
 Internet Payments @ 100.00 x 1000 Vets (Estimate)

\* Contractual Service  
 \*\* Maintenance & Subscription  
 \*\*\* General & Contingencies

## XIV. CLOSING STATEMENT

The Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County plays a pivotal role in providing essential support and resources to our Veteran community. As we look towards Fiscal Year 2024, the growing demand for our services and the evolving needs of Cook County Veterans necessitate a strategic budgetary allocation to ensure the continuation and expansion of our impactful programs. This justification outlines the compelling reasons for a \$2,144,835.00 budget, which will enable the VACCC to sustain and enhance its vital mission of serving and empowering Veterans and their families.

### *Increasing Demand for Services:*

Over the past few years, the VACCC has experienced a substantial increase in the number of Veterans seeking our assistance. The direct financial support and other essential services provided by the VACCC have become crucial lifelines for Veterans facing hardships. A budget of \$2,144,835.00 will allow the VACCC to meet the growing demand for services and ensure that every Veteran in need receives the comprehensive support they deserve.

### *Comprehensive Continuum of Care:*

The VACCC is dedicated to providing a comprehensive continuum of care to Cook County Veterans. This includes financial assistance, housing support, legal services, employment resources, educational programs, and more. By allocating sufficient funds, we can maintain and expand these vital programs, ensuring Veterans have access to a holistic range of services that address their unique and evolving needs.

### *Expanded Outreach and Advocacy:*

To reach more Veterans and raise awareness of our services, the VACCC intends to enhance its outreach efforts. This includes collaborating with community organizations, Veteran support groups, and local media to effectively disseminate information. An increased budget will support these outreach campaigns, ensuring that every Veteran in Cook County knows they have a reliable resource in the VACCC.

*Investing in Skilled Staff:*

To continue providing high-quality services, the VACCC plans to invest in additional skilled staff members. These professionals will support program development, case management, advocacy efforts, and more. A sufficient budget allows us to recruit and retain talented individuals who are passionate about serving our Veteran community.

*Conclusion:*

A budget of \$2,144,835.00 for FY24 is a strategic investment in the welfare and empowerment of Cook County Veterans. It will enable the VACCC to meet the increasing demand for services, expand our outreach efforts and invest in skilled staff. With this budgetary allocation, the VACCC will continue to be a beacon of support for our Cook County Veterans and their families.

Additionally, with the valuable support and approval from Cook County, for the VACCC to secure the proposed increased budget to provide unwavering support in return to the Veteran community, together, we can strengthen our commitment to ensuring that our Veterans and their families that reside in Cook County receive the vital assistance and comprehensive support they rightfully deserve.



# XV. APPENDIX

